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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/PLO, Pope Anti-Islam
Statement, NAM Summit, Syria/Europe, Attack on the US Embassy in
Damascus, Lebanon, Iraq (9/15-18)

11. Summary: Syrian papers reported the visit to Damascus by
former Palestinian PM Ahmad Qurei, who met with President Asad
and conveyed a message from President Abbas. He also met with
VP Shara and held a press conference in which he expressed hope
that a Palestinian national unity government would be formed
soon, noting that the government should be based on the National
Accord document from which an agreement between Hamas and Fatah
has emerged.

Papers also covered the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Havana
with the participation of FM Minister Mouallem. On the sidelines
of the NAM summit, Mouallem met with Jose Ramon Fernandez, Cuban
Deputy Prime Minister, Marta Lumas, Cuban Minister of Foreign
Investments and International Cooperation, President Leonel
Fernandez of the Dominican Republic, and Iraqi Deputy President
Tareq al-Hashemi. Mr. Mouallem confirmed to Al-Hashemi Syria's
keenness to enhance relations with Iraq and to make the political
process in Iraq a success, in order to achieve security,
stability and territorial integrity in Iraq.

On the controversy over the Pope's anti-Islam statement, papers
featured a statement by Syrian Grand Mufti Ahmad Badr Hassoun
calling for a Christian-Muslim religious summit to prevent
eruption of a religious war between Christians and Muslims.
Papers also featured Hassoun's statement accusing some Western
and Zionist public figures of preparing the ground for a war
between Christianity and Islam. He called on the Ulama and
religious authorities to "act cautiously and realize that a
third party is trying to ignite a war in order to turn
international attention away from the Palestinian and Iraqi
issues."

On Euro-Syrian relations, papers reported the visit to Damascus
by European MPs, who met Mahmoud Al-Abrash, Speaker of the
People's Assembly, and Abdullah al-Dardari, Deputy Prime
Minister for Economic Affairs. The European MPs reiterated the
importance of consummating the Syrian-European association
agreement due to its important role in achieving human and
economic development that will contribute to the peace process
and security and stability in the region. The delegation said
that Europe has become more convinced of the need to further the
peace process and that Syria is an important element of the
process. The EU MPs asserted the need for Israeli withdrawal to

the June 4, 1967, borders and for restoration of Palestinian rights.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Qurei conveys a message to President Asad from Abbas. Syria calls on Palestinians to adhere to national unity in these circumstances. Qurei: We aspire to a national unity government" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/18)

"The NAM summit unanimously rejects US hegemony. Mouallem: Israel has aborted the peace process; the co-sponsor has turned into a defender of Israeli aggression" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 9/17)

"The NAM summit in Havana salutes the Lebanese National Resistance. Mouallem: Sponsor of the peace process protects Israeli assaults" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 9/17)

"The NAM summit elects Syria as vice president and decides to hold its next conference in Cairo. The NAM summit calls for finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and for a full Israeli withdrawal from occupied Golan" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/18)

"Syrian Mufti calls on Vatican to make clarifications on the anti-Islam statement" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/16)

"Pope Benedict repeats apology to Muslims in Sunday ceremony. The Christian-Islamic Action Committee in Syria calls to correct

what happened.

"Speaker of the People's Assembly reviews with European MPs the horizon of bilateral cooperation between Syria and Europe. The EU reiterates the importance of consummating the association agreement with Syria" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/17)

"Nasrallah calls for a rally on Friday evening to mark the Resistance victory. Changes to the Blue Line by UNIFIL raises suspicions among Lebanese about the UNIFIL role. Lebanese MPs and figures call for changing the government, holding the imaginary majority responsible for the deteriorating situation" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/18)

"Lebanese circles say that Resolution 1701 has failed to prevent Israeli violations" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 9/17)

"Lebanese fear from trespassing by the UNIFIL forces and the possibility of using them to protect Israel" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/16)

"The new government formed by Hanieh will not recognize agreements with Israel" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/17)

"Former Palestinian PM Qurei is in Damascus today. Abdul-Hadi, PLO spokesman: Syria is keen for national Palestinian unity" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/16)

"Chief of Marine Intelligence admits incapability of controlling the Iraqi area of Anbar. A number of casualties and injuries during attacks in Mosel and Baghdad" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/17)

"Former CIA official accuses the CIA of assassinating Hariri, Houbeiq and Garange" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/16)

"Washington says change in the EU position on the Palestinian government is not a justification to lift embargo. The EU announces support for a national Palestinian government.

"Additional Australian forces to Iraq. The US army acknowledges killing of four soldiers and loss of fifth. 2680 US soldiers killed in Iraq" (Government-owned Tishreen, 9/16)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Combating Terrorism is a Syrian Course"

Muhyi-al-Din al-Muhammad, a columnist in government-owned Tishreen, said (9/15): "The attack against the US Embassy in Damascus was a terrorist act that targeted not only that specific place but also security, stability, and national cohesion in Syria, especially since some sleeping or transitory terrorist cells found in the chaos that resulted from the American invasion of Iraq, in the arrogant policy that the United States pursues toward the peoples of the world, in the flagrant American support for the Israeli aggression on the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples and in the state of anger and resentment that dominates the Arab street, an appropriate climate to recruit followers and incite them to carry out terrorist actions against US interests even if these actions result in dozens of innocent victims who mostly oppose the US Administration's reckless policy....

"It is obvious that the terrorists who attacked the US Embassy in Damascus on September 12 have adopted the takfiri ideology that has explicitly announced, in many countries, that it is engaged in open war with the United States and its interests....

"The foiling of the attack on the US Embassy is not a Syrian message to the US Administration seeking approval and praise.

Rather, it reflects a clear Syrian approach in combating terror wherever it exists....

"Americans know quite well that the intelligence information that Syria gave them helped foil many terrorist operations in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere after 9/11. I believe the estrangement between Syria and the United States is due to Syria's opposition to the American occupation of Iraq and to the American support for Israel in its ongoing aggression against the Arab peoples in Palestine and Lebanon and in its continuing occupation of Arab territories. It is also due to the US Administration's reckless policy, which leads only to further instability and to the growth of extremist and violent movements and the revival of the terrorist and takfiri organizations that will spare no place in the world from their operations.

"That Syria has managed to thwart the attack on the US Embassy and to foil other operations in the past two years, and to be constantly vigilant to confront anyone targeting its security and the security of its citizens does not mean that radical treatment of terrorism does not require that the United States reconsider its policies, incursions, preemptive wars, and absolute bias toward the Israeli aggression, which leads to the expansion and growth of terrorism despite the money that has been spent and the weapons that have been used to eliminate it."

"US Gratitude"

Michel Khayyat, a columnist in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (9/15): "Through the gratitude that it expressed to Syria over its handling of the attack on the US Embassy in Damascus, the United States appeared to be dotting the i's and admitting the truth for the first time since the events of September 11....

"We as Syrians were not surprised by the success of Syrian anti-terror forces in their heroic performance against the terrorists. Perhaps the secret behind this lies in the fact that the United States, in particular, must not forget from now on that every Syrian citizen, whether a soldier or a civilian, is against mad, criminal, blood-thirsty terrorism....

"Syria deserves a reward from the world because it works in the interest of the world and its security and peace....

"Perhaps this fact will convince the United States that it is mistaken when it directs unjust accusations against Syria. As it expressed itself through spontaneous performance, Syria is a hospitable country that respects international laws and norms and cares about the lives of its citizens and guests."

"Does This Atmosphere Encourage Terrorism?"

Izz-al-Din al-Darwish, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, said (9/16): "The United States has devoted many aspects of its war on terrorism to an open war against Arab and international efforts to bring about a just and comprehensive peace in the Arab region....

"Establishing peace in the region on the basis of a just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict appeared in the eyes of the Bush Administration as a kind of terrorism. This Administration, therefore, unleashed Israeli aggression, obstructed peace efforts, and asked Israel to adopt more hard-line positions....

"The final result of this American war on terrorism was as follows: The United States occupies, directly and through

military force, an Arab country and an Islamic country and dominates other countries in the region. Moreover, it strikes in more than one place in the region. Israel also occupies and attacks. Terrorists deals stronger blows. And there are no signs of hope that this situation will end. Indeed, there is strong frustration in the Arab and Islamic street, resulting in further estrangement from the US Administration and lack of trust in its policies and positions. It is no exaggeration to say that the Arab street is boiling in its rejection of the policy of the Bush administration and its unlimited support for Israel's aggression. The question is: Does this climate help the fight against terrorism?"

"UNFIL Tasks"

Ahmad Dawwa, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, commented (9/17): "Neither the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon UNIFIL nor the Security Council is doing anything against Israel's repeated violations of Resolution 1701....

"It is natural for this to cause much apprehension and suspicion among the Lebanese people.... The inaction of the Security Council and UNIFIL shows either inability to deter Israel as a result of the American position, or a desire to return the situation in south Lebanon to tension and war....

"In either case, the Lebanese government must act. This government closes its ears and eyes to the Israeli violations without giving a justification for this position. This raises many questions about the content of the agreements and understandings that this government concluded publicly and secretly with the parties that worked on Resolution 1701

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regarding the mission of the international forces.

"The German Chancellor's statement that the mission of the German forces operating within UNIFIL is to protect Israel does not appear to be a slip of the tongue, as a Lebanese official termed it.... What is happening on the ground now proves that these forces came to protect Israel, not to prevent violations of Resolution 1701.

"The Security Council must put an end to this major defect by

announcing clearly and explicitly UNIFIL's mission, in order to avoid the consequences of the Israeli interpretations."

Corbin